

THE PLEASURE OF GOD IN SALVATION
Galatians 1:15-17

Intro: There are several passages in the book of Acts and in the Pauline epistles where we have the personal testimony of the Apostle Paul. This is one of them. It sounds very much like Peter's comment about salvation in 2 Peter 1:10, although Paul's is the more complete. And it is right that they should sound alike because both men believed the same about salvation. They believed that the foundation of salvation was laid in the good pleasure of God.

Note this same emphasis in Eph. 1, vv. 3-5, 9-11.

We could even go to that amazing verse in Isa. 53, v. 10:
 Yet **it pleased the Lord** to bruise him;
 he hath put him to grief:
 when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,
 he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days,
and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

This does not mean that the Lord enjoyed seeing His Son suffer. The Lord Jesus felt the withdrawal of the presence of the Lord when He was dying on the Cross. All creation seemed to revolt at the treatment our Lord was receiving. But "it pleased the Lord" in the sense that this was His will.

Whatever pleases the Lord is the will of the Lord.

So, written over the whole truth of salvation are the words, THIS IS WHAT WAS PLEASING TO GOD. And this applies to every detail of our salvation. It is of God from beginning to end. And that is true of the salvation of each one of us. Salvation is not the outworking of the will of man. As Spurgeon said long ago,

It (salvation) does not begin with man's obedience, and then proceed onward to the purpose of God; but here is its commencement, here the fountain-head from which the living waters flow: "It pleased God" (Vol. 56, p. 289).

Paul taught it this way to the church at Rome:

So then it is not of him that willeth,
 nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy
 (Rom. 9:16).

If when we get to heaven we are asked, "How did you get here?", the best answer will be, "Because 'it pleased God.'"

We are going to observe the Lord's Supper tonight. Perhaps some day, if the Lord gives us our own church building, we will have a communion table like I have seen in many churches with the words carved on the front of the table, "In remembrance of Me." But we could just as well have this words inscribed on it: "It pleased God." The death of Christ pleased the Father because it was His will. The resurrection

of Christ pleased the Father; it was His will. Everything about salvation pleased Him; it was all His will. And that applies to every detail of it.

But now let us notice, especially in v. 15 and in the beginning of v. 16 what Paul in this instance included in that which was pleasing to the Father. The first point is this:

I. SEPARATED HIM FROM HIS MOTHER'S WOMB (Gal. 1:15m).

Paul could have gone back much farther than that. He could have written what he wrote in Eph. 1:4. Or he could have written what he wrote to Timothy in 2 Tim. 1:9.

Speaking of God he said,

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling,
not according to our works,
but according to his own purpose and grace,
which was given us in Christ Jesus
before the world began.

But Paul just went back to the time when he was in his mother's womb to emphasize that he had nothing to do with his salvation. It was all determined before he was born.

Perhaps this reminded you, as it did me, of what Paul wrote to the church at Rome about Esau and Jacob. You will remember that before those twins were born Rebekah, their mother, was told, "The elder," who was Esau, "shall serve the younger," who was Jacob. The Lord chose Jacob, but did not choose Esau. But listen to Paul's comment in Rom. 9:11:

For the children being not yet born,
neither having done any good or evil,
that the purpose of God according to election
might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.

And, if you know anything at all about the life of the Apostle Paul before he became a Christian, you know that he certainly did not deserve to be saved. So it cannot be that the Lord chose any of us because we deserved to be saved. The reason itself is locked in the heart of God. The only reason we can give as to why we are saved is the same reason that Paul give: "It pleased God."

And we can reason from that and say that, if He did not choose me because I deserved it, then He is not going to cast me away when I fail to please Him as a Christian. God does not change His mind.

But let us go on to the second point. Paul went on to say,

II. HE "CALLED ME BY HIS GRACE" (Gal. 1:15b).

Paul had absolutely no idea as he grew to young manhood that God had determined anything concerning him. And he was just like every other person, including you and me--he would not have wanted to be saved if he had known. So it was necessary for God to call him. Remember we are talking about the will of God, the good pleasure of God. And when God called him, he also worked in the heart of Paul so that, in his case, in a moment of time, he was made submissive to the will of God. He called Paul effectually, effectively. God was successful in what He intended for Paul. He conquered his stubborn will on the road to Damascus, made him receptive to the Gospel message, changed his heart, and he put his trust in the Saviour whom before he had hated with all of his heart. That is the reason that Paul had to say that He called me "by his grace." He did not deserve it at all. It was the grace of God that separated the Apostle Paul, and it was the grace of God that led to his salvation--AND NOTHING BUT GRACE.

I love those words of Dr. B. B. Sutcliffe which we have on tape, words given during a Sunday School lesson at Central Bible Church when the church was downtown. He said this:

I didn't approach Him; He approached me. I wasn't looking for Him, He was looking for me. I didn't want Him, He wanted me. And He wanted me in order that He might give me to His Son. He drew me to His Son.

Don't you love that, too? Paul would have said that. I will gladly say that tonight. And I am sure that would be what many of you would say about your salvation. You did not want Him, but He wanted you. He had chosen you, and He sought you and found you and brought you to Christ.

Do you remember that old Gospel song?

Oh, the love that sought me,
Oh, the blood that bought me,
Oh, the grace that brought me to the fold;
Wondrous grace that brought me to the fold.

But we have one more point:

III. HE CALLED ME "TO REVEAL HIS SON IN ME" (Gal. 1:16a).

Let me ask you a question. When you are speaking to a person who is not a Christian, do you know that this is what has to happen to them before they can or will believe? Do you realize that?

And let me ask you another question: Do you think that you are capable of doing that for that person? Did you do it for yourself? What was it that caused you to see your need of Christ?

The answer is here. God not only separates to Himself those whom He will save, but He calls them, and He reveals Christ, not simply to them, but in them. And when He does that, there is no more struggling against God. The sinner has been changed, and he gladly and immediately puts his faith in Christ.

You see, all of the time that Paul hated Christ and was fighting against Christ, he did not really understand Christ. He needed to have his eyes open to Christ. He needed to realize Who Christ is, and why Christ died on the Cross.

This is the reason that we are to preach Christ. People need Him. They need to know Him. And when the message of Christ is proclaimed, the message that is dearer than any other message to the Father, then, if the Lord is pleased to do so, the Son is revealed in the heart of that one whom the Lord is claiming for Himself.

Can any man successfully resist God? I ask you, Is He God, or not? If He is God (and He is--make no mistake about that), all of the power of the Devil and demons and unregenerate men cannot keep Him from drawing to Himself those whom He has chosen.

Concl: I do not know who is going to lead our communion service tonight. Perhaps he will have something to say about the Lord's Supper before we are served. But let me say this for you to add to whatever else may be said. When you think of those words, "In remembrance of Me," let us remember His sovereign grace in doing all that He has done to make us His own. You and I are His because, first of all, He chose us, before the foundation of the world. The only reason that we have chosen Christ to be our Saviour is because He called us to Himself, and revealed to us, in our hearts, Christ. He showed us our need of Christ. He turned our hearts toward Christ. He gave us the faith to believe in Christ. REMEMBER THAT ALL OF THE GLORY BELONGS TO HIM, AND NONE OF THE GLORY BELONGS TO US.